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Pilot pole and troll zone project, Florida Bay,
Everglades National Park



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Objectives

- Provide protection to seagrass in a heavily used area
- Provide enhanced fishing, paddling, and wildlife viewing opportunities
- Educate visitors on the importance of proper boating practices in shallow water



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Recent suggestions...

Alt E/2.5 FINAL DRAFT Executive Summary-v2 – 4/17/09

“We suggest starting a pilot pole/troll area with reasonable access corridors through waters 2’ or deeper in Snake Bight north of Tin Can Channel as soon as possible.”

Audubon of Florida, the Nature Conservancy (5/15/09) and Resolution from Sanctuary Advisory Council (6/16/09)

“Prior to the finalization of the GMP, pilot the Pole/Troll Zone concept as soon as possible within Garfield Bight and from the Bowlegs cut to the northernmost Peterson Key.”

Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association – 5/14/09

“Snake Bight- We recommend that a pilot area be established as soon as possible as a poll & troll area North of Tin Can Channel with ingress/egress areas be marked into Jimmy's Lake and Porpoise Point.”

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Recent suggestions (cont.)

Coastal Conservation Association – 5/7/09

“CCA strongly recommends that the NPS review the pole and troll zones and access channels presently in place in the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and Fort Desoto area..... Areas such as Snake Bight or Garfield Bight that show a pattern of scarring could be used as a pilot project and its effectiveness could be measured over time.”

National Parks Conservation Association – 5/15/09

“NPCA supports the recommendations of Alternative E 2.5 and others that ENP pilot test a pole/troll areas(s) to begin the learning process and demonstrate the merits of this resource protection strategy.”

Key Largo Fishing Guides Association– 5/15/09

“We suggest starting a pilot pole/troll area with reasonable access corridors through waters 2’ or deeper in Snake Bight north of Tin Can Channel as soon as possible.”

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We visited pole and troll zones in Pinellas County

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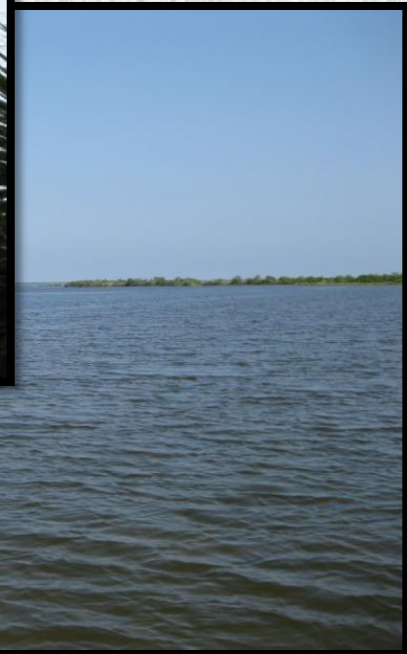
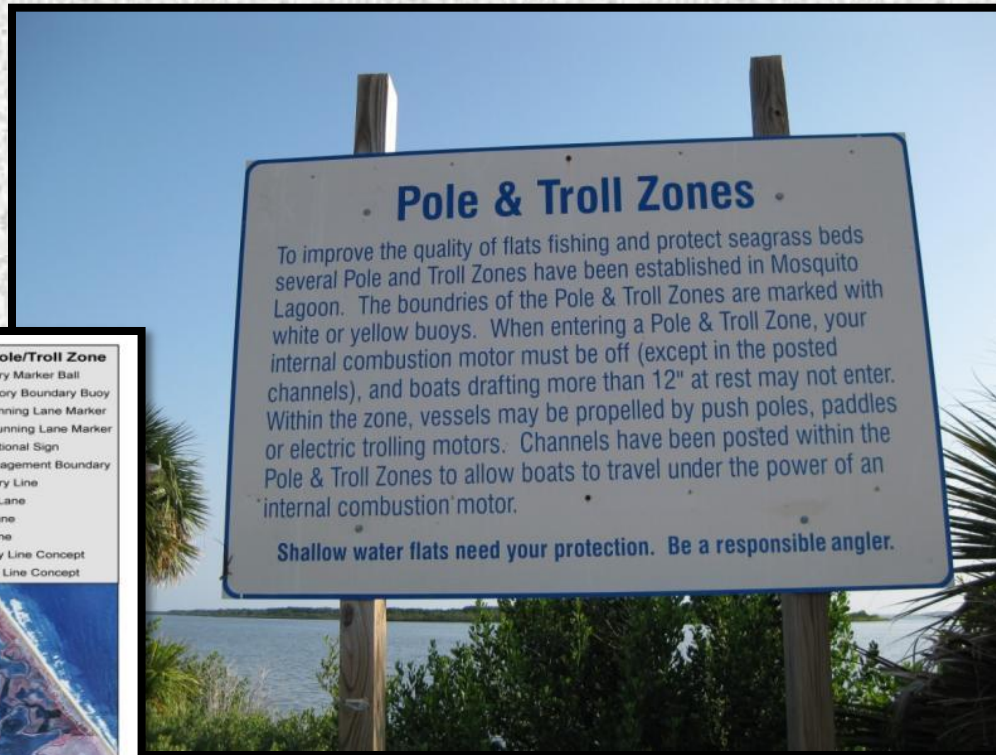
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We visited the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge's pole and troll zone

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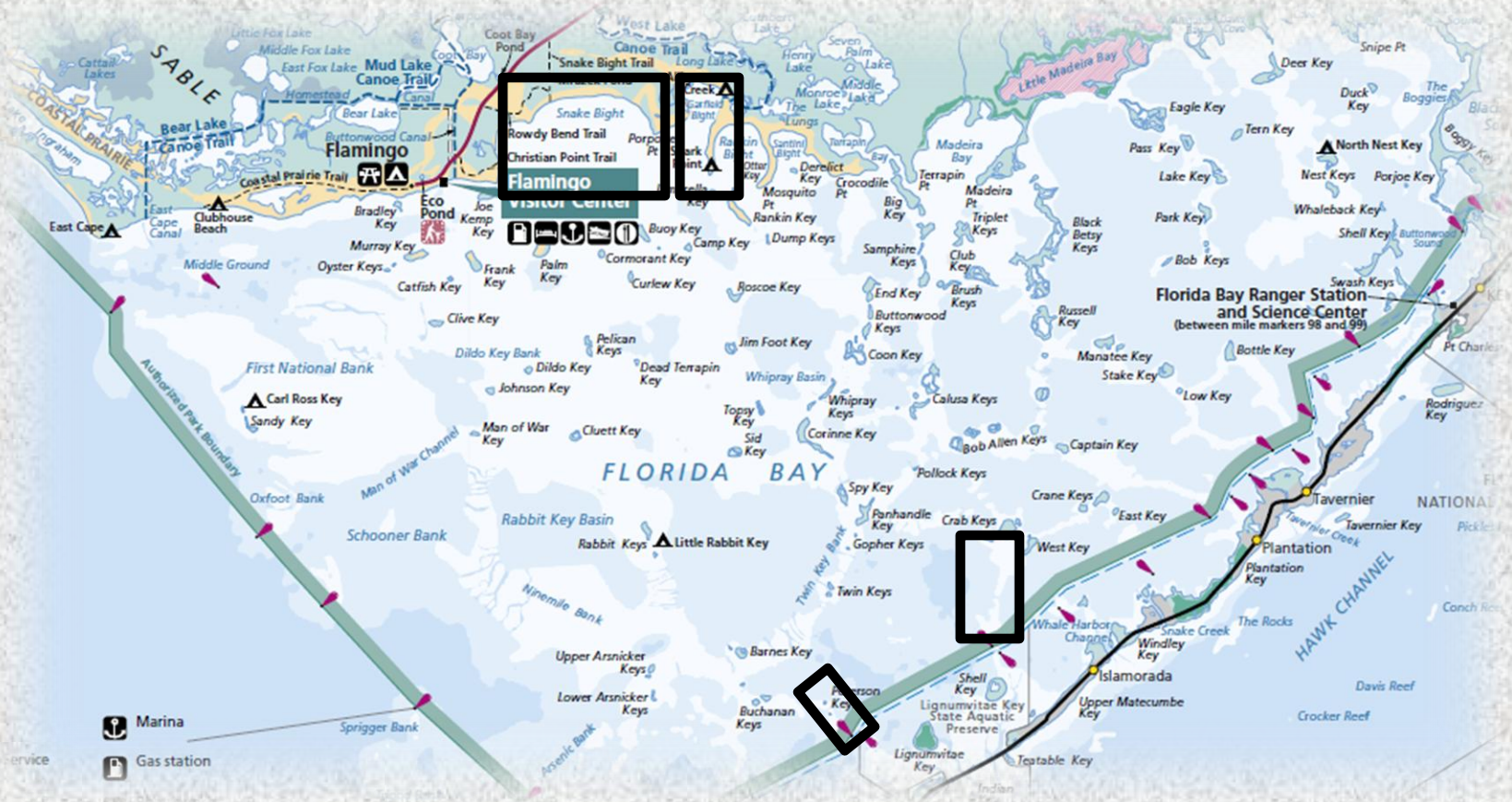
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We looked at 4 sites for suitability as a pilot pole/troll zone in Florida Bay





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We evaluated potential zones using these criteria:

CRITERIA:

- Accessibility
- Education impact
- Enforceability
- Sign-ability
- Area of protection
- Public support
- Damage
- Probability of seagrass recovery
- Enhanced visitor experience

After ranking the four areas,
Snake Bight was found to
be most suitable.

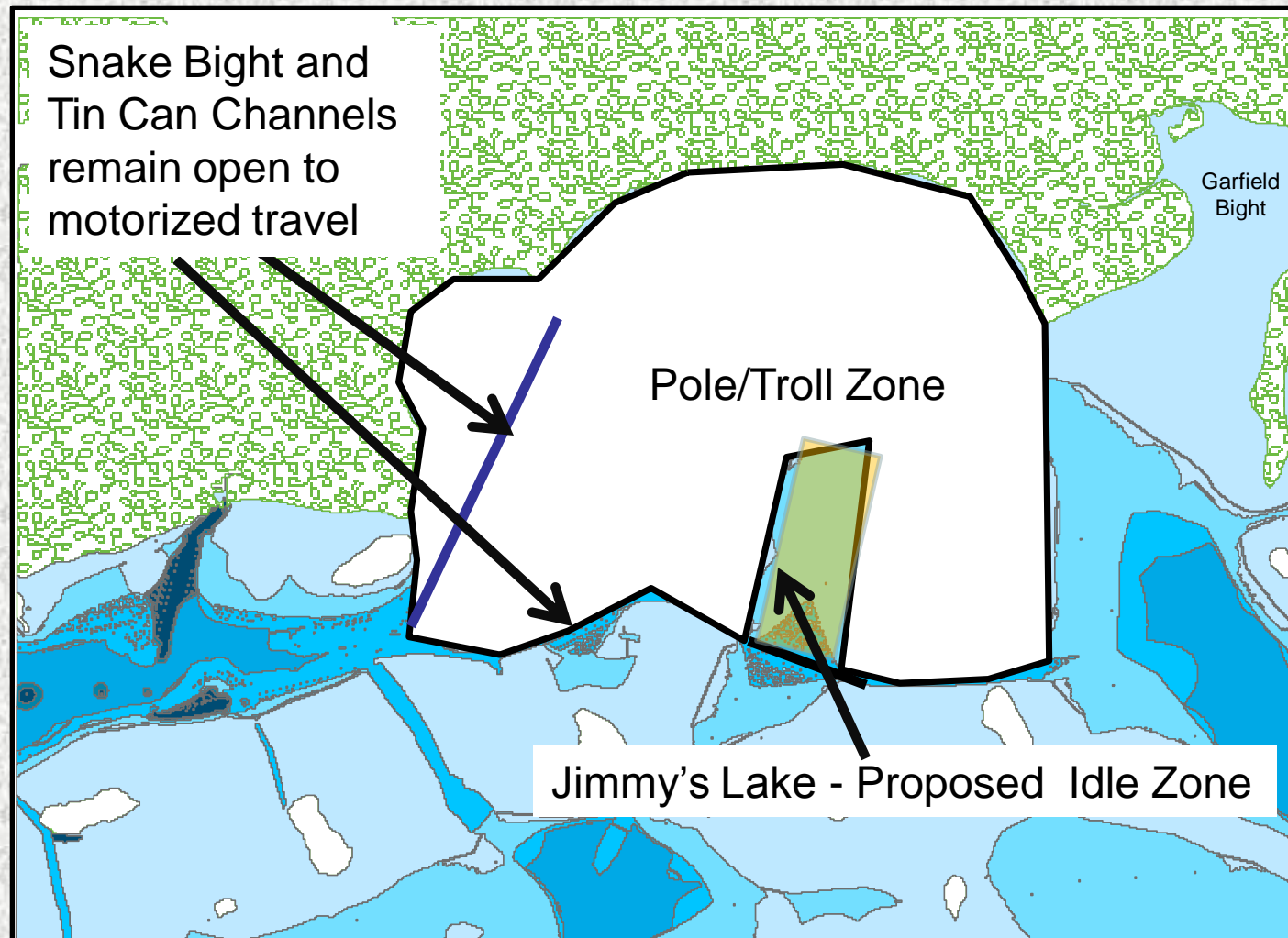
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Proposed zone – Snake Bight



Access from:

- Snake Bight Channel
- Tin Can Channel
- Jimmy's Lake idle zone

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We plan to monitor the efficacy of the new zone over a 3-year period, for example:

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Resource monitoring program

- Aerial photo-monitoring study
- Ground-based transect monitoring
- Ground-based individual scar recovery

Compliance monitoring program

- Dedicated education/enforcement over 3 years
- Annual summaries of education and outreach activities
- Compliance statistic summarized annually

Survey of visitor experiences

- Develop methods to survey the public regarding visitor experience in PTZ

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Next Steps

- 2 Public meetings
- 30-day comment period
- Develop educational media – brochures, maps, web media – there will be a large emphasis on education and outreach
- Develop monitoring plan
- Compliance work
- Permitting – US Coast Guard
- Final sign installation
- Educational period
- Final zone implementation

Submit comments here: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>

Acknowledgments

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services,
Vero Beach, Florida